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SUBJECT: NINEWA: SCIRI REPORTS THREATS TO SHI'A AND KURD
ENCROACHMENT

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader James Knight: Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).
This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) PRT Team Leader Knight and IPAO Pope met Ninewa leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and Provincial Council member Mohammed Ibrahim at PRT offices on FOB Marez 19 August 2006. Ibrahim emphasized that SCIRI supports multiparty democracy, and that SCIRI does not seek to impose Islamic conventions on Iraq. Ibrahim expressed SCIRI's disappointment that U.S. funds promised for rebuilding Ninewa have not been fully provided, and that the USG has not coordinated projects effectively with provincial leadership. He insisted attacks and intimidation in Mosul by Sunni against Shi'a have increased, and complained of Kurd plans to expand Kurdish control to Sinjar and Mosul's Left Bank. End Summary.

A BULWARK OF TOLERANCE

¶2. (C) When asked by the Team Leader to outline SCIRI's current priorities, Ibrahim recounted the party's evolution from an anti-Ba'athist movement headquartered in Iran. After the fall of Saddam the party moved its headquarters to Iraq, and has since established branches in the USA and Europe. When queried about Iranian influence over SCIRI, he added that SCIRI has no special relationship with the government of Iran, although they remain grateful for shelter offered by Iran during Saddam's dictatorship.

¶3. (C) Ibrahim emphasized that SCIRI is not interested in remaking Iraq into an Islamic state, and pointed out that SCIRI maintains good relations with all major political parties in Ninewa. SCIRI's interlocutors in Ninewa include the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and Christian groups, as well as Coalition forces. Ibrahim noted that most of SCIRI's constituents in Ninewa are laborers -- those who are suffering most under current economic and security conditions.

U.S. RECONSTRUCTION FUNDS FALL SHORT

¶4. (C) In view of his constituency's concerns, Ibrahim expressed disappointment with USG funding for Ninewa's Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee (PRDC) (Ibrahim is a PRDC member). Although USD 14 million was promised to Ninewa's PRDC this current fiscal year, Ibrahim reported that only USD 6 million has actually been received and spent by the PRDC.

¶5. (C) Team Leader Knight advised Ibrahim that USG records indicate funds promised have been provided and spent by the PRDC. The Team Leader added that the PRDC is likely to be folded into Ninewa's Provincial Development Committee soon, since most new reconstruction funding will be provided directly through the GOI. Ibrahim responded that better coordination between the USG and provincial leadership nonetheless remains necessary to provide the health, sewage treatment, other municipal infrastructure, and police services required in Ninewa.

SHI'A UNDER THREAT IN MOSUL

¶6. (C) When asked by the Team Leader about sectarian tensions in Mosul, Ibrahim reported that the Shi'a community is under growing pressure from Sunni extremists to abandon the city. Flyers have been recently distributed in Shi'a neighborhoods warning Shi'a to leave or face 'serious consequences'. He is personally convinced that members of Mosul's Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) have

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prompted these threats. Many Shi'a families have already moved out, usually to Christian areas on the edge of the city.

¶7. (C) Ibrahim further reported that sectarian violence in Mosul has claimed an average of a hundred Shi'a monthly for the last several months. He worried that a violent Shi'a reaction will boil up if public order is not restored soon. Ibrahim added his concern about the frequent prompt release of detained insurgents. This pattern has caused most of his party members to lose faith in Ninewa's judiciary, since so few of those arrested for violent crimes are actually tried and sentenced. Team Leader Knight responded by noting current efforts of the PRT's Rule of Law team to work with Ninewa's judges and police to resolve these problems.

KURD EXPANSIONISM THREATENS PEACE

¶8. (C) When asked if SCIRI members have concerns about Kurd influence in Ninewa, Ibrahim cited a recent effort by Kurds to control traditionally Shabek Shi'a areas near the village of Khazna. A dispute with Kurds over water rights in Khazna led to the murder of two villagers and an exchange of gunfire between Shabek and Kurds in the village. Ibrahim underscored that Kurds intend to incorporate Sinjar and the eastern half of Mosul into the KRG, notwithstanding emphatic denials by Kurdish party leaders.

COMMENT

19. (C) Ibrahim's asserts of sectarian violence in Ninewa are at variance with the more general view that violence in Mosul is driven by foreign fighters and disaffected former Ba'athists rather than Shi'a-Sunni tensions. His deep alarm regarding perceived Kurd intentions for Ninewa is also percolating through Ninewa's impoverished and disempowered minorities -- especially while Kurds dominate the provincial government and Iraqi security forces here. End comment.
SPECKHARD